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Letter dated 21 July 2000 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

In view of the violation of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities by the Government of Ethiopia through the actions of its Air Force planes in the Assab area on 17 July 2000, I have the honour to forward to the Security Council the strong request of the Government of Eritrea for a speedy investigation of the incident and, as the Government of Ethiopia has also requested, to make the findings public (see S/2000/704).

The Government of Eritrea had initially reported this violation only to the Organization of African Unity, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the partners in the peace process (the United States and the European Union), with the expectation that Ethiopia would accept its responsibility for the incident and refrain from any further violations of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities. Eritrea had refrained from publicizing the violation, hoping that such would be the case and had sought a diplomatic solution to the matter. Unfortunately, the Government of Ethiopia is publicly denying its violations. I thus now enclose a copy of the aide-mémoire sent by the Government of Eritrea on 17 July 2000 to the concerned parties, mentioned above, for the information and consideration of the Council (see annex).

I should be grateful if this letter and its annex were circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Tesfa Alem **Seyoum**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 21 July 2000 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Aide-mémoire

This morning (Monday, 17 July 2000), at 9.20 a.m. LT, three Ethiopian fighter planes intruded and penetrated deep into Eritrean airspace in the Assab area. Initial reports from our Air Defense Units in the area indicate that two of the intruding fighter planes were hit as they attacked our defense installations.

Ethiopia's intrusion today is a clear violation of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, which both countries signed in Algiers on 18 June 2000. Indeed, operative paragraph 1 of the Agreement states that both countries commit themselves to an "immediate cessation of hostilities starting from the signature of this document". Subsection 1.1 of the same paragraph further states: "both countries commit themselves to a cessation of all armed air and land attacks".

This is not the only instance of Ethiopia's violation of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities. Operative paragraph 8 of the Agreement calls on both sides to "conduct demining activities as soon as possible with a view to creating the conditions necessary for the deployment of the Peacekeeping Mission". Contrary to the letter and spirit of this provision, Ethiopia has and continues to plant new landmines inside sovereign Eritrean territory, particularly in the areas which fall within the temporary security zone. The Government of Eritrea has already brought this violation to the attention of the United Nations reconnaissance mission that visited both countries last week.

The Government of Ethiopia is also demolishing and razing to the ground Eritrean sovereign villages. Only last Monday, while the United Nations reconnaissance mission was in Eritrea, Ethiopian troops wantonly destroyed 170 private homes in Kisad Iqa, southern Eritrea. Ethiopian troops have perpetrated similar crimes, putting virtually all the residential huts ablaze in Guluj and Omhajer in western Eritrea.

It is clear that unless these violations are rectified in time, they will gradually erode and may ultimately nullify the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities signed by both countries in Algiers on 18 June 2000. The intrusion into Eritrean airspace today by Ethiopian fighter planes is particularly grave. The Government of Eritrea accordingly calls upon all concerned to take appropriate measures to ensure that the Government of Ethiopia respects all provisions of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, a continued violation of which warrants action by the Security Council in accordance with operative paragraph 14 of the Agreement. The Government of Eritrea remains committed to the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities that it has signed and will continue to demonstrate restraint in spite of these provocations.

The Government of the State of Eritrea
Asmara